

Topic: Bridging the band/guard divide (a problem I've had in every fall ensemble I've worked with, and I know going separate ways in winter is the nature of things, but are there ways to use the whole year to counter this?)

In many programs the guard is made up of students outside of band. Also, in many cases, the guard practices/warm ups/stretchers separately from the band much of the time. What are some ideas to help bridge that divide?

*The staff must be cohesive across the board. The communication between staff members is key. It is important for the students to see that communication happening between the staff. If the staff works together, why can't the students? Using the titles such as "Mrs.", "Mr.", "Miss", etc between the staff members shows a mutual respect that the students can also pick up on. For everyone in attendance at the Roundtable, it was in agreement that this connection should start with the staff and trickle down from there.

***During marching band season, some ideas to improve divide include:**

-Having 'Squads' The Squads represent a members from each section of the band (a flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, guard member, percussionist, etc). The Squads are numbered or given names. Squads can be assigned duties/responsibilities ("Clean up duty today is Squad 5"; "Squad 2 leads stretches today.") to do together throughout the season. This gives the opportunity for members from different sections to get to know one another and work together.

-Use the guard students to help teach movement block to the band. Since many times the guard students have been doing a movement block or across the floors in their own rehearsals, this gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their strength and interact with the band members.

***After marching band season and throughout the rest of the year:**

-Continue to communicate with your band director what is going on with the winter guard. Fill them in on how things are going as often as possible. Keep them in the loop! The only time they hear from you should not be if there is an issue! Ask the band director to talk with the band students about the winter guard and how they are doing. Invite the band members to come to a rehearsal, and also invite them to come support the guard at contests.

-Ask for band members to be the floor crew for the winter guard. Include them in rehearsals (mainly the rehearsals right before a contest to learn what to do). Let them design or make their own winter guard 'floor crew' shirt or wear the same 'show shirt' the guard is wearing.

-As a guard, attend the winter and/or spring band concerts and jazz concerts. If the band is having a fundraiser, such as a trivia night, have the guard attend to show support as well.

Biggest Takeaway: Communication and respect between staff! If all the staff can work together respectfully and towards a common goal, then the students will hopefully follow that lead and do so as well.